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Special Operations Forces (SOF), if properly integrated, can significantly influence the outcome of a military campaign. However, unless commanders and planners understand SOF capabilities and limitations, and as importantly, how SOF fits into the operational environment, this potential force multiplier may be misused. The purpose of this paper is to outline the Theater Operating System (TOS) and how SOF should be integrated into that system. It does not restate SOF related doctrine but refers the reader to the various service component manuals for a more detailed discussion. Instead, its primary focus is on how the commander should *think* in terms of employing SOF from an operational perspective. Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm is used to illustrate how one CINC was able to fully integrate SOF into his campaign.

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SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES (SOF): AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE THEATER OPERATING SYSTEM

by

Christopher S. Perkins
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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Joint Maritime Operations Department.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College, the Dept of the Navy, or the Dept of the Army.

Signature 

8 February 1994

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Abstract of
SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES (SOF):
AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE THEATER OPERATING SYSTEM

Special Operations Forces (SOF), if properly integrated, can significantly influence the outcome of a military campaign. However, unless commanders and planners understand SOF capabilities and limitations, and as importantly, how SOF fits into the operational environment, this potential force multiplier may be misused. The purpose of this paper is to outline the Theater Operating System (TOS) and how SOF should be integrated into that system. It does not restate SOF related doctrine but refers the reader to the various service component manuals for a more detailed discussion. Instead, its primary focus is on how the commander should *think* in terms of employing SOF from an operational perspective. Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm is used to illustrate how one CINC was able to fully integrate SOF into his campaign.

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SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES (SOF): AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE THEATER OPERATING SYSTEM

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The classroom at the College of Naval Command & Staff was filled with field grade Army officers. The day's lesson, part of the Army's "greening" course required for those attending a sister service school, dealt with the organization and capabilities of special operations forces (SOF). The instructor looked out over the classroom and asked if anyone could tell him what Special Forces did. After a moment, a hesitant hand was raised and a major offered: "They go behind enemy lines?" The instructor pressed the class for more; "And then what?", he inquired. After one more uncomfortable minute passed, another hand was raised and the officer volunteered: "Eat snakes?"

The true story related above, which seemed humorous at the time, illustrates a fundamental problem which continues to exist throughout the services: Unless commanders and plans officers understand the roles and capabilities of SOF and how they fit within the operational environment, this force multiplier will be subject to potential misuse in future conflicts.

The general ignorance regarding special operations which exists within the military is due in great part to three primary reasons: Special operations have traditionally been shrouded in secrecy and remain outside the realm of conventional experience; joint and individual service component doctrine relating to SOF has only recently been included as part of the professional development curriculum; and the operational level of war, in which special operations is best employed, is itself a misunderstood concept and requires further scrutiny.

The first of these is gradually disappearing as a factor concerning SOF. As the global threat diminishes, operations other than war are becoming more common, and with them, the use of SOF. Conventional forces find themselves working in concert with these "secret warriors" on a much more frequent basis, and the civilian press has been quick to publicize their stories.

Regarding SOF doctrine, it is not the purpose of this paper to provide a lengthy discussion of the missions and capabilities of the various service component SOF units; readers are invited to turn to the many field manuals and

publications which describe the characteristics of special operations in detail.

Instead, this paper will focus on the third reason that is responsible for the potential misuse of SOF, the fact that many commanders do not fully understand the operational level of war, and that they are therefore incapable of fully integrating SOF into their campaign plan. Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm illustrates how SOF, properly integrated into the CINC's concept of operations, can decisively influence the outcome of a campaign.

Chapter II describes the Theater Operating System (TOS) as a collection of synchronized combat functions found within the operational level of war. Each of the six functions are defined, to include a discussion of the various considerations and responsibilities unique to the operational level commander in the employment of SOF.

Chapter III contains a detailed account of special operations conducted during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, each mission described in relation to its corresponding combat function within the theater operating system.

Located at Appendix I is a description of the type and size of SOF units deployed in support of the Gulf War. This section provides the reader with an idea of the scope of SOF related support within a theater of operations.

CHAPTER II

THEATER OPERATING SYSTEM (TOS)

At both the operational and the tactical levels of war, commanders orchestrate a series of combat related functions to decisively influence the outcome of war; the first in the conduct of campaigns or major operations, the latter through the conduct of individual battles which make up the campaigns. Both commanders view these combat functions as part of an integrated system of operations. There is, however, a hierarchal difference between the two levels of war, and each has its own operating system.

The Army's recently released FM 100-5, *Operations*, makes a vague reference to "functional operating systems that exist at each level of war", but continues to discuss only that found at the tactical level. Referring to this as the battlefield operating system (BOS), the manual defines it as a series of synchronized combat functions which include the following: maneuver; intelligence; fire support; air defense; mobility and survivability; logistics; and battle command. The only help it affords the operational level commander is the observation that "the BOS has other applications at the operational and strategic levels."[1] Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, also fails to provide much clarity regarding an operating system at the operational level, although it does describe the function of maneuver from a higher perspective.

In fact, the only direct reference to the higher echelon operating system is found in an appendix of the Army's FM 31-20, *Doctrine for Special Forces Operations*, in which the BOS is augmented by a theater operating system (TOS) and lists the following combat functions: operational maneuver; operational fires; operational protection; operational command & control; operational intelligence; and operational support. Instead, however, of affording the commander significant insight as to the employment of SOF from an operational perspective, the manual goes on to state that the TOS are neither "detailed" nor integrated into doctrine! Worse yet, it suggests that Special Forces

commanders, in advising their conventional counterparts and superiors, should speak in terms of the tactical level BOS and "portray SF functions in terms that are understandable to the conventional Army".[2]

While many special operations have tactical and strategic significance, SOF is foremost a CINC asset, to be utilized at the operational level of war. This implies, therefore, that only when the commander thoroughly understands TOS, that it is a system which synchronizes all combat and support activities from an operational perspective, can SOF be truly integrated into the campaign. Using the terms listed in FM 31-20, the remainder of this chapter defines the various combat functions of TOS and describes how special operations might influence them. Only when the commander *thinks* in these terms can SOF be optimally employed.

Operational Maneuver

The commander at the operational level of war does not *move* his forces on the battlefield --- he *positions* them. The Army's field manual on Special Forces doctrine attempts to distinguish between tactical and operational maneuver: Tactical maneuver is that combat function concerned with the *employment* of forces, implying maneuver units. Operational maneuver, on the other hand, is that function which concerns the *disposition* of forces, meaning all assigned forces.[3] To truly understand what is operational maneuver, what it entails and how it differs from its tactical level counterpart, one must appreciate the subtle distinction between the two. More than a problem of semantics, it is the key to the maneuver functions for which the operational commander is responsible.

Employment of forces, in terms of maneuver, involves actual movement during combat in accordance with established tactics and synchronized with available fire support; it is the "zigging left" and "zagging right" to win the battle. SOF, in this sense, is concerned about such things as routes of ingress/egress and should not be considered a "maneuver force".

Disposition of forces, however, must be viewed in a much broader context regarding the operating system. At the operational level of war, it has two subcomponents: the placement of forces throughout the theater of operations prior to battle; and the exploitation of tactical success once that battle begins.[4] Both seek to gain and hold the positional advantage.

Prior to D-Day, the operational commander positions his forces to gain leverage over the enemy; that is, he attempts to set the terms for future combat. He does this in light of his operational objectives, his enemy's disposition and his own force's vulnerabilities and capabilities. Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, describes this leverage as being "relative to enemy centers of gravity", wherein the operational commander positions his forces so that he might influence the enemy's source of strength without endangering his own.[5] In defining this positional advantage, therefore, the commander must also consider the positioning of his logistics, intelligence, command and control, and other sustainment assets. In coalition warfare, SOF can indirectly influence this aspect of the CINC's maneuver function: By serving in a liaison and training role, they can actually increase the combat capabilities of the allied armies, eventually integrating them into the campaign's scheme of maneuver. In short, SOF can help "create" force multipliers for the CINC to position.

Once the conflict begins, the operational commander must maneuver his forces to exploit the success of his subordinate commanders. He does this by repositioning his combat power, strength against weakness, in order to maintain his positional advantage. In doing so, he continues to set the terms for subsequent battles and therefore retains the initiative. SOF might indirectly contribute by conducting enabling missions which would increase the mobility and survivability of the tactical maneuver units. An example of such a mission might be one designed to neutralize a key defensive position or monitoring site.

Operational Fires

Operational fires are those elements of firepower available to the theater commander which can directly achieve operational objectives. They include air, land or sea assets and have the capability of *independently* influencing the outcome of the campaign or major operation.

There are two categories of operational fires: lethal fires and nonlethal fires. Elements of SOF are included in each.

Lethal fires are designed to destroy enemy facilities and personnel through direct, violent action. Examples of lethal operational fires would be: air interdiction platforms, missile delivery systems, nuclear munitions, and even special operations forces. Consideration of SOF assets as operational fires illustrates the point that fires ares not limited to artillery tubes or "rounds down range" as in the tactical use of the term. A Special Forces "A-Team" can destroy a key enemy command and control site as effectively as any explosive munition.

Nonlethal fires are designed to disrupt the enemy's operating systems rather than to destroy them. The primary nonlethal assets available within the theater are the Army's psychological operations (PSYOP) units and the individual service component's electronic warfare (EW) assets.[6]

As with operational maneuver, a distinction between tactical and operational fires must be emphasized. As mentioned above, operational fires can stand alone in achieving their objectives and are not necessarily tied together with maneuver. On the other hand, fire support, the tactical application of fires, is directly related to tactical maneuver and is not used to achieve independent objectives. Although some modern weapons systems, such as the Patriot Missile, have the capability for application at either level, the nature of their use will determine which category they fall within.

This does not mean, however, that operational fires are not related to operational maneuver; only that they need not be. The most effective campaign plan will seek to integrate the two to maximize their effects. In applying

both functions in concert, the theater commander will be able to dominate the situation. If the enemy counters his maneuver, the opposing force will be vulnerable to the CINC's operational fires; if instead, the enemy commander seeks to protect his force from the operational fires, he will make them more vulnerable to maneuver.[7] Either way, an effective combination will allow the commander to shape the battle and retain his leverage of position.

Operational Protection

Just as the CINC combines operational maneuver and operational fires to gain positional advantage and leverage over the enemy, so must he protect friendly forces from the enemy's similar designs. From the operational perspective, this entails those actions designed to safeguard his own assets, his own freedom of action, and most importantly, his own center of gravity.

To guard the force against hostile operational maneuver, the theater commander can employ early warning systems, to include reconnaissance patrols, electronic countermeasures, and even the establishment of surveillance sites deep in hostile areas with the use of SOF personnel.

The commander must also protect his force from operational fires. One of the primary means to do so at the operational level is to ensure that an effective air defense system is in place. This involves ADA systems such as the Patriot missile; Air Force and Naval air assets; and even measures taken to disperse his forces within the theater of operations.

Another major component of the CINC's protection plan must be an effective deception plan. This, along with established OPSEC measures, will mask the disposition of friendly forces and prevent the enemy from targeting them. SOF capabilities make them an excellent tool for the operational commander to use in the conduct of a deception plan.

In addition to protecting his force from the enemy, the theater commander must take steps to protect them from each other, or acts of fratricide. At no time is this more important than during coalition warfare. SOF is well suited

for this function in two ways: Prior to hostilities, they can be employed in the conduct of a Foreign Internal Defense (FID) mission, part of which emphasizes recognition and control aspects of combat. Once the war begins, they might serve in a liaison role to "micro-manage" against the possibility of fratricide.

Finally, designating forces for combat search and rescue (CSAR) and counter-terrorism (CT) should also be considered in terms of operational protection. Several SOF units train extensively in these areas and are the Army's best choice for this mission.

In short, the CINC must be aware that what he can do to the enemy can be done to him; as he targets their center of gravity, so must he protect his own. SOF should be viewed as an "enabling force" for this task.

Operational Command & Control

This is the enabling function of all operating systems. At the operational level, the theater commander's ability to integrate his maneuver and fires is completely dependent upon his command and control system.

The *command* aspect of this function pertains to the CINC's authority over his combined forces, both in terms of organization and employment. In coalition warfare, usually an ad hoc formation of culturally and militarily diverse nations, this aspect can be extremely complicated. Commanders of multi-national forces must therefore be particularly flexible in designing a functional C2 structure. By establishing an effective command relationship, the commander can attain the necessary unity of effort to attain the operational objectives.

The *control* aspect involves the commander's ability to integrate the various combat functions into an effective operating system. At the operational level of war, the commander exercises control by providing clear guidance, maintaining continuous communications and through the application of operational constraints designed to synchronize the actions of his subordinate

commanders. Here again, special arrangements must sometimes be made for integrating and controlling forces within a multi-national coalition. The use of centralized coordination centers and SOF liaison elements can be particularly effective, both in joint and combined operations.

Effective command and control can be measured by the degree of synchronization within the theater operating system.

Operational Intelligence

This combat function involves the collection, analysis and dissemination of theater related intelligence, both of a military and non-military nature, and is designed to provide the commander with a clear understanding of enemy intent and capability. With this knowledge, he can counter his opponent's fires and maneuver while most effectively applying his own.

Theater commanders have a number of intelligence gathering mechanisms at their disposal, including national level resources as well as organic assets. To gain the highest degree of clarity regarding the enemy disposition, the CINC will utilize all available sources, including his SIGINT, ELINT and HUMINT capabilities. SOF units are trained and equipped to support the commander in each of these areas.

At the operational level, the commander establishes a plan which usually includes centralized management, often through the creation of a Joint Intelligence Center (JIC). This method ensures the coordination of all collection, processing and distribution efforts within the theater of operations. The commander is then able to prioritize demands and reduce any duplication of effort, thus alleviating many of the problems which generally arise within the theater as a result of the high demand on the system.

Coalition warfare presents the theater commander with additional considerations. A major responsibility of the CINC must be to determine to what extent his coalition partners should be included within the intelligence net. Every effort must be made to fully integrate each member of the

coalition in order to exploit the contributions of each contingent. There is no force better prepared to conduct this assessment and integration mission than the Army's Special Forces.

Operational Support

A force is only as good as the commander is able and willing to support it. This is the basic premise of sustainment at the operational level and begins from the moment the force enters the theater until redeployment. It entails the design and development of the infrastructure; the acquisition, storage, distribution and maintenance of materiel; personnel management; and health services.[8]

At the operational level, commanders must design a concept of logistics which supports the maneuver plan. Prior to deployment, the CINC must select the proper balance of combat and support elements which best satisfies the initial phase of the campaign plan. In the case of Operation Desert Shield, for example, CINCCENT had to establish a deployment priority list. On one hand, he had an immediate need for combat units to deter the Iraqis from attacking into Saudi Arabia. At the same time, however, he was cognizant of the need for an established support base to sustain this force --- a "chicken or the egg" type scenario. GEN Schwarzkopf solved his dilemma by coordinating for host nation (HN) support to augment CENTCOM's organic assets.

Once the combat phase begins, the theater commander must ensure that the campaign objectives are consistent not only with his available fire and maneuver capabilities, but with the force's logistical tail as well. History tells of more than one operational genius who out ran his own sustainment! (This point reiterates the fact that operational maneuver must include the commander's *entire* force, not just his combat assets.) The commander accomplishes this support by phasing his operation and maintaining his lines of communication (LOCs). Exercising this restraint is an integral part of operational art.

CHAPTER III

INTEGRATION OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES (SOF) INTO THE THEATER OPERATING SYSTEM (TOS)

Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm witnessed the employment of the entire spectrum of the services' Special Operations Forces (SOF). Each component, with its unique characteristics and capabilities, was fully integrated into the theater commander's campaign plan. While their numbers were relatively small in comparison to the total forces deployed in theater, their impact was substantial.

Employment of SOF in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm

Operational Maneuver. When the chief historian of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) was asked to name the greatest contribution of Army SOF, he replied: "They gave GEN Schwarzkopf two additional Corps." While this might be seen as an overstatement by some, the success of the 5th SFG(A) in their primary mission of coalition warfare went beyond even the CINC's expectations. An SF team was attached to each Pan Arab maneuver unit, from Corps headquarters down to battalion level. Their liaison and training efforts did much more than convert six allied armies into competent combat units --- they helped build a coalition. More importantly, their influence was instrumental in *maintaining* the coalition. This fact is particularly significant in that, while CINCCENT could now design his campaign plan around two more Corps, he was cognizant of the need to keep the Coalition unified.[10] Failure to do so would have had adverse strategic-level ramifications.

SF teams also took the lead in the reconstitution of the exiled Kuwaiti Army. Organizing the remnants of this force into light infantry and mechanized brigades, the SF advisors were sometimes forced to scavage for weapons and other equipment. These Kuwaiti brigades were to eventually play a key role in recapturing their capitol and gave an extra note of legitimacy to the CINC's campaign plan and coalition warfare.

Navy SEALs and SBU personnel likewise contributed in the reconstitution of the Kuwaiti Navy. The resulting three-ship force played an important role in Coalition CSAR operations.

In addition to adding to the CINC's positional advantage during Operation Desert Shield, ARSOF units influenced his offensive capabilities once Operation Desert Storm was launched:

Minutes before H-Hour, MH-53J *Pave Low* helicopters equipped with special navigational systems led a squadron of AH-64 attack helicopters into Iraq to destroy two strategic early warning radar sites.[11] This action "opened the door" and permitted Coalition aircraft undetected entry.

Additionally, in order to enhance operational mobility, SF teams were inserted along the Coalition's main axes of advance to conduct soil sampling.[12] This activity, while having obvious tactical consequences, played a small but significant part at the operational level in determining the CINC's overall concept of operations.

Operational Fires. Even in light of modern, technologically advanced munitions, SOF should be counted among the best "smart" weapons in the inventory. Often overlooked by operational planners who focus on such things as air interdiction assets, missile delivery systems and even nuclear weapons, SOF can decisively influence the outcome of the campaign.

During Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, SOF offered the theater commander an assortment of both lethal and nonlethal fires. Probably the most lethal example of SOF as an operational fire was the use of AFSOF MC-130 *Combat Talon* aircraft to drop a number of BLU-82s onto a number of key Iraqi positions. The illumination from one such blast, dropped more than fifty miles into Iraq, caused a Saudi brigade commander positioned near the border to ask his SF advisor whether the US was employing nuclear warheads![13] In an effective blend of lethal and nonlethal fires, these 15,000-pound bombs were preceded and followed by air-delivered leaflet drops as part of the CINC's PSYOP plan. Air Force AC-130 *Spectre* aircraft were used by the CENTCOM J-3 to interdict targets deep inside Iraq. Although these same aircraft performed

close air support for Corps assets, the interdiction missions are examples of operational fire. Another widely publicized demonstration of SOF lethal fires from the operational perspective was the use of SEALs to destroy Iraqi air defense positions atop several oil platforms in the Persian Gulf. As with the MH-53Js' operation against the radar site, the SEALs' success resulted in the opening of a major corridor during the critical air campaign in January.

A Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) was created by US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and assigned the mission of hunting down SCUD missile launchers, CENTCOM's priority target during the campaign. In support of this mission, Army Rangers conducted a raid against a strategic Iraqi communications site. The destruction of this facility is believed to have seriously impaired Iraq's ability to employ their SCUD missiles.[14]

In terms of nonlethal operational fires, SOF conducted operations which had a psychological impact on both enemy and friendly forces.

In addition to the leaflet drops already mentioned, PSYOP units targeted Iraqi soldiers and civilians with loudspeaker operations and pre-recorded radio broadcasts from AFSOF EC-130 aircraft.[15] These efforts contributed to the surrender of a great number of Iraqi forces, and consequently, resulted in fewer US casualties.

Finally, the unconventional warfare operations conducted by SF teams and the Kuwaiti resistance must be seen as an example of operational fires. The activities of these SF personnel were instrumental in preserving the Kuwaiti population's will to resist their invaders. The resistance force within Kuwait City would tie up two divisions of the Iraqi Army during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm and eventually prove to be useful in capturing intelligence documents at the end of the campaign.[16]

Operational Protection. From a defensive operational perspective, SOF contributed to the CINC's campaign plan in every facet of this combat function.

SF teams worked with Saudi Special Forces personnel in manning a number of early-warning sites along the Iraqi border during Operation Desert Shield.

The Coalition was extremely vulnerable during the early days of the operation, and security during the build-up phase was a major concern of the theater commander.

Navy SEALs and SBUs conducted coastal patrols and countermine operations within the Persian Gulf to safeguard the Coalition's sea lines of communications (SLOCs).

Due to the perceived high risk from enemy chemical weapons, SF personnel spent a great deal of time training Coalition forces on NBC protection measures. While the execution of this and other FID related training was of a tactical nature, the overall strategy of creating an efficient coalition, one capable of working as a unified team and defending itself, was a theater level operational goal.

Another threat was potential terrorist activity. As a precautionary measure, SOCCENT deployed SF and SEAL teams with specific training and equipment to counter such a threat. Although the threat never materialized within the theater, a contingency force was in place.

Additionally, joint SOF combat search and rescue (CSAR) teams were formed to support the air campaign. These consisted of SF or SEALs, sometimes accompanied by CCT and PJ personnel, infiltrating hostile areas aboard ARSOF or AFSOF helicopters to secure downed pilots. Although they were successful in only three of eight attempts, their missions had operational utility in the degree of confidence they inspired throughout the Coalition.

As discussed earlier in terms of operational fires, the JSOTF in western Iraq, deployed in part to hunt SCUD launchers, was also providing the CINC a form of operational protection. Although the impact it had in protecting the coalition units was obvious, this operation was certainly more significant in that it played a major role is addressing Israel's defense concerns, therein keeping her out of the war. This situation, a strategic problem in itself, would again have placed the CINC in an adverse position and jeopardized the coalition.

SOF also played an important role in the theater deception (OPDEC) plan. With the main attack in the west, the CINC used his Marine Expeditionary Force to conduct an amphibious feint which drew Iraqi attention and forces to the coast and away from the main effort. As part of this deception, Navy SEALs detonated charges along the Kuwaiti shoreline which helped to further convince the enemy they were facing a threat from the sea.

A final role SOF played regarding operational protection may have been their most important. While the CINC was concerned about protecting his forces from such things as the enemy's operational maneuvers and operational fires, he also had to protect his coalition from itself! SF teams travelling with each battalion level unit in the Coalition were assigned the difficult task of minimizing fratricide.[17] By monitoring and reporting their position in relation to the other formations, they were able to advise their Arab counterparts regarding friendly action during the ground phase of the operation. Given the "fog of war" in coalition warfare, their efforts significantly reduced the number of casualties from friendly fire.

Operational Command & Control. As discussed in Chapter II, a primary purpose of this combat function at the operational level is the coordination of battlefield maneuver; without this function, tactical gains would become merely *ends* in themselves rather than the *means* to a greater operational success. In a number of examples during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, SOF was able to provide the CINC this element of C2, thereby allowing him to exploit success throughout the theater.

The "two additional Corps" that the historian referred to as a SOF contribution have been described as CINC assets for operational maneuver. The process of *how* this contribution was made, however, is what highlights one of SOF's greatest achievements during the Persian Gulf War.

At the strategic level, perhaps the greatest strength of the Coalition lay in its ability to agree on a common objective, and the subsequent unity of effort it enjoyed throughout the entire campaign. Translating this common goal into combat action, "bridging" the strategic and tactical levels of war,

was dependent upon the CINC's ability to integrate the various components of the Coalition into the plan. At the upper end, he accomplished this by establishing a Coalition, Coordination, Communications and Integration Center (C3IC).[18] At the lower end, he completed the link by employing SF teams in a liaison role. These teams became part of the supported Arab units' field command centers and provided such integration related assistance as two-way communications, intelligence reporting, operational planning and tactical training. Their efforts allowed the theater commander to synchronize the battlefield and enhanced his freedom of operational maneuver.

Operational Intelligence. As a major source of HUMINT at theater level, SOF played a significant role during the war as the CINC's "eyes and ears" on the battlefield.

Knowledge of the enemy's operational maneuver plan will obviously influence the commander's own campaign designs. To gain this knowledge, a number of SF teams were infiltrated deep into Iraq to conduct special reconnaissance (SR). Their mission was primarily to observe major enemy avenues of approach and to report on significant troop movements and potential reinforcement activity. These actions were a significant part of the CINC's intelligence plan.

In particular, SOF had an important role in the CENTCOM decision concerning the ground phase main attack. When the CINC's planners observed the western flank of Iraq's Kuwait defense to be relatively exposed, they began to explore the option of an armored flanking movement from the west. "This type of flanking attack looked so attractive that General Schwarzkopf had to take special measures, such as a deep reconnaissance by special forces, to make sure that he was not being lured into a trap."[19] After confirmation by SF teams infiltrated into the area, this option became the approved course of action.

Another example regards those operations within Kuwait City conducted by SF and Navy SEALs in conjunction with resistance forces. Clandestine teams were able to identify and report Iraqi command sites in the city. In more

than one case, these teams were responsible for the capture of massive amounts of documents which detailed Iraqi human rights violations and which had the potential for use in future war crime investigations.[20]

But perhaps the most important role SOF units played in support of operational intelligence had nothing to do with the enemy. During Operation Desert Shield, as CENTCOM planners organized the Coalition forces and prepared war plans, the CINC needed a realistic assessment of his assigned non-US combat forces. He met with COL Johnson, his SOCCENT commander, and charged his SF component with providing what he called "the ground truth" regarding the Coalition.[21] The SF liaison teams were able to keep the theater commander continuously apprised of the status and disposition of his Pan Arab allies. This knowledge subsequently influenced the organization and employment of the Coalition during Operation Desert Storm.

Operational Support. Each service component is responsible for their own SOF regarding sustainment support. For Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, ARCENT established the 5th Special Operations Support Command (TASOSC) to conduct centralized management of ARSOF's sustainment requirements. Their mission was to prioritize and coordinate with theater organizations for all ARSOF mission-essential requirements. After the TASOSC had set theater priorities and established working relationships throughout the theater, ARSOF units were to submit their requirements directly to established direct support units.[22] The Air Force and Navy were to function in a similar fashion.

The problem was that 5th TASOSC was slow to arrive in theater, and even then was not sufficiently integrated into the theater system. In the end, ARSOF relied on their organic unit, the 528th SOSB, to coordinate and provide logistical support. Once this ad hoc system began to function, SOCCENT tasked them to "pick up the slack" for the NSW units as well.[23]

In terms of operational support, the failure to fully integrate the TASOSC into the theater operating system resulted in degraded support functions (logistics, intelligence, aviation) for ARSOF, and later, NSW units.

At the theater level, this was not strictly a SOF related problem; when the system did not support SOF requirements, every other unit was adversely affected.

Civil Affairs (CA) units, on the other hand, proved to be an extremely valuable asset for the CINC in terms of operational support.

A problem during the initial weeks of Operation Desert Shield was that combat units had been deployed into theater prior to their logistical support. CA units were able to alleviate the problem by coordinating for host nation (HN) support.

CA units also contributed to the CINC's operation by anticipating, planning and coordinating all assistance requirements for post-war Kuwait City. Lessons learned from such conflicts as Operation Just Cause in Panama have demonstrated the need for a civil affairs within the CINC's campaign plan.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Special operations forces, which include components of the Army, Navy and Air Force, can be a significant force multiplier in support of the theater commander's campaign plan. While SOF's main efforts have traditionally been at the low end of the spectrum of conflict, they can be extremely effective in a mid-intensity scenario as well. Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm is an excellent example of how SOF can decisively influence the outcome of a war when properly integrated at the operational level.

The widespread and effective use of SOF during the Gulf War was primarily due to the theater commander's ability to weave the various combat functions into a synchronized operating system and then integrate SOF operations into that system. GEN Schwarzkopf, during the early days of the conflict, was somewhat skeptical regarding the use of SOF. His advisors on special operations, however, were able to translate the capabilities and limitations of SOF into actions which could impact at the operational level.[24] The theater commander's superior application of operational art, coupled with a developed appreciation for the employment of SOF as an operational asset, created an environment which should be the model for all future operations.

Two things must occur, however, if the success SOF enjoyed during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm is to become the rule rather than the exception.

First, the tactical level BOS is inadequate for the operational level commander and must be augmented with a developed theater operating system. Operational art stems from the commander's perspective of the battle, and each level of war has its unique perspective. The Army's FM 31-20, *Doctrine For Special Forces Operations*, states that "commanders must apply the [tactical level] BOS differently to ... portray SF functions in terms that are understandable to the conventional Army."[25] While this passage acknowledges the problem, it offers the wrong solution; instead of describing special

operations in the lower level, tactical terminology, efforts should be made to integrate the TOS and its related terminology into the military lexicon. The service schools, with their renewed emphasis on operational art, are providing part of this solution. The TOS must be included in future doctrine for the commander regarding *how to think* from an operational perspective.

Finally, SOF advisors should no longer be instructed to "apply the BOS differently" when addressing the use of SOF at the operational level. While special operations frequently have tactical ramifications, SOF is primarily a theater level asset which must be addressed in terminology understandable and relevant to the operational level commander. The development of TOS will alleviate this problem as well.

APPENDIX I

SOF UNITS EMPLOYED IN SUPPORT OF

OPERATION DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM

Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF)

The Army deployed units from all five of its special operations components:

The first component consisted of Special Forces (SF). Also known as "Green Berets", these soldiers are the Army's foremost asset for the conduct of Unconventional Warfare (UW). Their other missions include Foreign Internal Defense (FID), Direct Action (DA), and Special Reconnaissance (SR) operations. Each soldier is required to maintain proficiency in a foreign language and can instruct allied forces in all aspects of the military's combat functions. The basic Special Forces unit is the twelve-man Operational Detachment Alpha, although this may be further divided when organizing for a mission. An SF company consists of a headquarters element and six operational detachments. Three of these companies, a support company, and a headquarters detachment make up an SF battalion. Finally, an SF group is comprised of three battalions, a support company and a headquarters company. Each SF group is oriented to a particular region of the world, and in addition to language proficiency, its members possess a high level of cultural familiarity. The 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), oriented to the Middle East region, deployed in support of Desert Shield/Desert Storm. When SOCCENT staff members determined that the group's growing requirements exceeded their capabilities, a battalion from the 3rd SFG(A) and a company from the 10th SFG(A) were deployed from CONUS to augment theater SOF. An additional company from 1/10th SFG(A), forward based in Germany, was committed to support SOF operations in northern Iraq.

The second component was a contingent of Army Rangers. This unique force is considered to be the best in the world at carrying out DA or strike operations. The basic Ranger unit is a platoon, with three rifle platoons and

a weapons platoon in a company; a Ranger battalion consists of three rifle companies and a headquarters company. A company of these elite "commandos" from 1st Bn, 75th Inf (Ranger), was deployed in support of Operation Desert Storm.[26]

The third ARSOF component was Special Operations Aviation. This specialized rotary-wing unit's primary mission centers on the infiltration, exfiltration and sustainment of SOF activities in the theater of operations. Considered to be among the best aviators in the world, this unit's specialty is clandestine penetration under adverse conditions and during periods of limited visibility. A battalion, the 3/160th (SOAR), was employed in the Persian Gulf.

The fourth component included Psychological Operations (PSYOP) personnel. These forces use specialized communications techniques and equipment to conduct propaganda activities directed at specific target populations. Their primary means are leaflets, loudspeakers, and pre-recorded broadcasts designed to influence the behavior of their audience. During Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, the 4th Psychological Operations Group (POG) was augmented by Reserve PSYOP personnel.[27]

The final, but by no means least important, ARSOF component were Civil Affairs (CA) units. Primarily consisting of Reserve personnel, these units support both conventional forces and SOF to enhance military operations through the influence, control or development of civilian organizations. The 96th CA Battalion, the Army's only active duty CA unit, was augmented by eighteen Reserve CA units for Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm.[28]

Naval Special Warfare (NSW) Forces

The Navy deployed units from each of its three primary special operations components:

The first component consisted of Sea-Air-Land (SEAL) units. These elite SOF units are organized, trained and equipped to conduct primary missions to include DA, UW, FID and SR; although much like the Army's Special Forces.

SEALs focus primarily on (but are not limited to) maritime and riverine environments. A SEAL team consists of a headquarters/support element and ten sixteen-man operational platoons, each of which can be further broken down in accordance with mission requirements. Nine SEAL platoons from five different SEAL teams were deployed in support of the Gulf War.[29]

The second component of NSW included Special Boat Unit (SBU) personnel and equipment. These forces employ a number of unique surface craft in the conduct of special operations. Their primary missions include coastal patrols and interdiction operations, as well as providing a means of infiltration and exfiltration of SOF personnel. A Special Boat Unit is usually organized into a headquarters element and several surface craft detachments. Eight SBU Detachments were employed during Operation Desert Shield/Storm.[30]

The final NSW component consisted of SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV) units. As the name implies, these personnel possess many of the same characteristics and capabilities as their SEAL counterparts, with the additional mission of operating combat submersible systems in the conduct of special operations. An SDV team generally consists of a headquarters/support element, two Dry Deck Shelter platoons and four SDV platoons. Only one SDV platoon from SDV Team One was used during the operation.[31]

Air Force Special Operations Forces (AFSOF)

Air Force special operations units deployed for Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm included five major components:

The first component consisted of special operations airlift aircraft, including Special Operations Squadrons (SOS) of both fixed-wing and rotary-wing assets. AFSOF MH-53J and MH-60G helicopters are equipped for all-weather, all-terrain, long-range flight. Air refuelable, these aircraft are designed for the clandestine infiltration and exfiltration of SOF, suppressive fire support, combat search and rescue (CSAR) operations and other related missions. The 20th and 21st SOS (MH-53J) and the 55th SOS (MH-60G) employed in Desert Storm.[32]

In addition to the vertical-lift capability, this component also included MC-130E fixed-wing aircraft designed to infiltrate and exfiltrate denied airspace through the employment of advanced electronic systems and tactics. Like their rotary-wing cousins, these aircraft are outstanding in the movement and sustainment of SOF personnel. The 7th and 8th SOS (MC-130E) were deployed to the theater of operations.[33]

The second AFSOF component consisted of fixed-wing gunships. The AC-130, equipped with advanced electronics and weapons, is capable of conducting ground interdiction and close air support (CAS) in support of both convention forces and SOF missions. The 16th SOS and 919th SOS (AC-130) supported Desert Storm.[34]

The third component included aerial tankers. HC-130 tanker aircraft are equipped to extend the range of SOF rotary-wing assets through mid-flight refuelling operations. The 9th and 67th SOS (HC-130) were used in Operation Desert Shield/Storm.[35]

The fourth component of AFSOF was PSYOP support aircraft. The EC-130E is a specially modified version of the C-130 fixed-wing aircraft that provides both television and radio broadcast capabilities. EC-130Es from the 193rd Special Operations Group (SOG) Pennsylvania Air National Guard were deployed to support the CINC's PSYOP plan.[36]

The final component included Special Tactics Units and consisted of Combat Control Teams (CCT) and Pararescue (PJ) units. CCT personnel are parachute qualified air traffic controllers whose primary mission is to infiltrate hostile territory for the purpose of directing air strikes, establishing landing or drop zones, and special reconnaissance. Pararescue personnel generally function as part of SOF aircrews during search and rescue operations to provide trauma medical care.

By the time CENTCOM initiated redeployment procedures in March 1991, more than 9,000 SOF personnel were employed in support of Operation Desert Shield/Storm.

NOTES

1. U.S. Department of the Army, Operations, FM 100-5, (Washington, D.C.: 1993), p. 2-12.

2. U.S. Department of the Army, Doctrine for Special Forces Operations, FM 31-20, (Washington, D.C.: 1990), p. A-3.

3. U.S. Army, Doctrine for Special Forces Operations, FM 31-20, (Washington, D.C.: 1990), p. A-5.

4. *Ibid.*, p. A-5.

5. U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations, Joint Pub 3-0, (Washington, D.C.: 1990), p. IV-12.

6. R.H. Hartman and Milan Vego, "Theater Support Functions" NWC 3096, (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 1993), p.10.

7. U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Pub 3-0, p. IV-19.

8. U.S. Army, FM 100-5, p. 12-2.

9. Telephone conversation with Dr. Richard W. Stewart, Director of History and Museums, U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), Fort Bragg, NC, 14 January 1994.

10. Richard W. Stewart, Ph.D., "Forging the Coalition: The Role of US Army Special Forces in the Persian Gulf War 1990-91," Unpublished report, USASOC, Fort Bragg, NC: n.d.

11. Department of Defense, p. J-13.

12. Telephone conversation with CPT Christopher E. Connor, 24 January 1994.

13. Telephone conversation with MAJ Peter E. Davis, 16 January 1994.

14. Robert H. Scales et al., Certain Victory (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Staff, United States Army, 1993), pp. 185-186.

15. Parker interview.

16. Department of Defense, p. I-29.

17. Davis interview.

18. Department of Defense, p. I-10.

19. Norman Friedman, Desert Victory (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), p. 218.

20. Department of Defense, p. 407.

21. Telephone interview with COL Krause, Director, J-3 SOD, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D.C.: 24 January 1994.

22. U.S. Army, Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces, FM 100-25, (Washington, D.C.: 1991), p. 6-13.

23. Krause interview.

24. *Ibid.*

25. U.S. Army, FM 31-20, p. A-3.

26. Interview with MAJ Scott A. Francis, 25 January 1994.

27. Interview with MAJ Jay M. Parker, 24 January 1994.

28. U.S. Department of Defense, Conduct of the Persian Gulf War: Final Report to Congress Pursuant to Title V Persian Gulf Conflict Supplemental Authorization and Personnel Benefits Act of 1991 (Public Law 102-25), (Washington, D.C.: 1992), p. J-24.

29. Interview with LCDR Dennis Granger, 25 January 1994.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. Interview with MAJ Randy O'Boyle, 26 January 1994.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*

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